(c) Following steps have been planned to prevent such occurrence in future:—

(i) Serving of VIP customers from more than one Exchange so that in case of failure of one Exchange, atleast partial service can be maintained from the other Exchange.

(ii) Diversity of media.

(iii) Replacement of batteries with new sets of batteries of higher capacity.

(iv) Provision of change-over of batteries and power-plants from one set to another to avoid simultaneous failure of both sets of batteries.

**Procurement of equipment by BSNL without open tender**

421. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. proposes to procure equipment for three million lines without an open tender;

(b) whether the BSNL has chosen to procure the equipment from existing vendors like Motorola, Ericcson and ITI-Lucent through repeat order limited tender;

(c) whether the BSNL had found these companies involved in forming a cartel in 2001 when it had procured equipment for four million lines; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. For 2 million lines through limited tender from the existing vendors.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

**Waiting list of telephone connections in Assam**

422. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of consumers waiting for telephone connections under the Assam Telecom Circle;

(b) the reasons for non-fulfilment of demands of these consumers in the waiting list;

(c) how many WLLs are likely to be established within next three years and where would they be established; and

(d) whether it would be sufficient to cope with the waiting list problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) The number of consumer waiting for telephone connection in Assam Telecom circle as on 30.06.2003 is 13817.

(b) The waiting list of 5970 in urban exchanges are pending due to non-availability of underground cable. The cable has been allotted and is in pipeline. Additional requirement of underground cable is planned to be allotted. The remaining waiting list is scattered in rural and farflung areas where provision of telephone connections on traditional wire line is economically not viable.

There was delay in introduction of Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) systems in Assam, as initially Government did not give permission due to security reasons. The WLL systems are now being deployed on priority in Assam after the grant of permission from Government.

(c) 22000 Lines of WLL system is targeted for Assam during 2003-04. 35 New BTSs are planned to be installed at the stations furnished in Statement in addition to 26 existing BTSs (*See* below). For the year 2004-05 and 2005-06 the plans have not been finalised yet.

(d) Sufficient equipment has been allotted to clear the waiting list.